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Follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 60/134, in which the Assembly referred to actions taken since the International Year of Volunteers in 2001 and called for follow-up by relevant parts of the United Nations system. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-third session on the implementation of the resolution and to include proposals on ways to mark the tenth anniversary of the International Year.

Taking the overall situation of volunteerism since 2001 into account, the report focuses in particular on developments since the adoption of resolution 60/134 in 2005. Follow-up to the results of the International Year continues, despite national disparities in the implementation of the outcome recommendations (see A/57/352). The level of adoption also varies within the United Nations system. Proposals on possible ways to mark the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers in 2011 included in the report and others that will be developed at regional and country levels are expected to build on the growth and diversification of volunteerism that the International Year helped to stimulate.

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The role and contribution of volunteerism to achieving the Millennium Development Goals continues to be a central thread running through reporting on follow-up to the International Year. An important addition to the discussion in the report is the role of volunteers and organizations involving volunteers in addressing environmental issues, including climate change. Volunteerism is integral to sustainable development, and the present report makes that connection explicit.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–4	3
II.	The state of volunteerism	5–12	3
III.	Progress in implementation	13–41	5
	A. Recognition	14–20	5
	B. Facilitation	21–29	8
	C. Networking	30–34	11
	D. Promotion	35–41	12
IV.	The United Nations system	42–46	15
V.	International Year of Volunteers plus 10	47–49	17
VI.	Conclusions and recommendations	50–63	17

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 52/17, the General Assembly proclaimed 2001 the International Year of Volunteers based on the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1997/44, the aim of the International Year was to enhance volunteerism in all its forms in terms of greater recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion. The United Nations Volunteers was designated as focal point for the International Year's preparation, implementation and follow-up. The Year's closure was marked by the adoption of General Assembly resolution 56/38 in which the Assembly recognized the importance of volunteerism for "any strategy aimed at, inter alia, such areas as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, disaster prevention and management and social integration and, in particular, overcoming social exclusion and discrimination". In the annex to the resolution the Assembly recommended ways in which Governments and the United Nations system could support volunteering and called upon them to give the recommendations due consideration.

2. In its resolution 57/106, the General Assembly recognizing the important role of volunteerism for meeting the goals set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and at other major United Nations conferences, summits, special sessions and their follow-up meetings, requested the Secretary-General to report at its sixtieth session on the resolution's implementation.

3. The 2005 report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers indicated that most of the recommendations proposed by the General Assembly in resolution 57/106 were being taken up by Governments and the United Nations system, as well as by other stakeholders from civil society and the private sector (see A/60/128). National and regional variations in trends were identified as needing to be addressed if volunteerism was to realize its full development potential. Welcoming the Secretary-General's report, the Assembly, in resolution 60/134, requested a further report to be submitted by the Secretary-General at its sixty-third session and that it contain proposals regarding possible ways to mark the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers in 2011. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request.

4. The report considers overall progress in implementing General Assembly resolutions, particularly since the last report in 2005. It comes in the wake of *The Development Millennium Goals Report 2007* which highlighted how much still needed to be done to achieve all the Millennium Development Goals, asserting that they would be attained only if concerted additional action is taken and sustained until 2015. Volunteerism represents a vast and largely untapped resource that developing country Governments are only beginning to recognize as a tremendous asset which they can draw upon to help meet development challenges. The report addresses developments under the four pillars mentioned in resolution 52/17: the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism.

II. The state of volunteerism

5. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals will require the engagement of countless millions of people through volunteer action. Volunteerism is embedded in the culture of almost every society and occurs irrespective of action taken by

Governments and the United Nations system. The extent to which people are willing and able to volunteer time to major development issues depends, however, on a range of factors, some of which can be positively influenced by actions taken by Governments, the United Nations system and other stakeholders.

6. Volunteerism, including mutual aid and self-help, service delivery, campaigning and advocacy, and other forms of civic participation, is a powerful asset for development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. By tapping into and building up the stock of knowledge, social entrepreneurship and solidarity in a country, volunteerism helps ensure sustainable capacities and strengthens values based on collaboration and partnership. To realize volunteerism's full potential for development, appropriate policies need to be devised and programmes introduced or strengthened that are grounded in an awareness of the changes affecting volunteerism.

7. Some changes were discussed in the report of the Secretary-General in 2005. Among the most significant was a shift away from a giver and receiver model of volunteering towards a more reciprocal relationship from which all parties benefit. Opening up opportunities for excluded people to participate in volunteerism is increasingly seen as an approach to promoting social inclusion. Developments in information communication technology are also driving some of the changes identified. Advances in global electronic volunteer networks and online volunteering are redefining the notion of "community". Increasingly, people wishing to volunteer are directly sharing skills and experience at a distance.

8. There is growing interest among developing country Governments in valuing local cultures and traditions of volunteerism and adapting them to modern-day circumstances. Specifically, Governments are preoccupied with the vulnerability of young people in the current economic climate and the potential consequences for society, compounded by rapid growth in the proportion of young people in the overall populations. In developing countries, 1.3 billion people are between 12 and 25.[1] In developed countries, on the other hand, the population aged 60 or over is expected almost to double, from 245 million in 2005 to 406 million in 2050.[2] Volunteering policies need to consider carefully, and accommodate, the implications of these demographic changes.

9. Recognition of volunteerism is being accompanied by calls for increased professionalism in formal volunteering management. While it has long been a professional category in developed countries, interest in volunteer management in developing countries is growing in response to demand for well-structured and managed volunteer opportunities. At the same time, volunteer-involving organizations seek maximum benefits from people willing to volunteer and are keen therefore to apply strategic management techniques to recruiting, training, supporting and retaining volunteers.

10. Alongside the drive for greater professionalism in managing volunteers is growing interest in introducing or strengthening measures such as

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[1] See World Bank, *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation* (Washington, D.C., 2006).

[2] See *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision: Sex and Age Distribution of the World Population* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 07.XIII.3).

volunteering-friendly policies and legislation, tools for measuring economic contributions, service volunteer schemes and volunteer centres.

11. Private-sector interest in employee volunteering as an expression of corporate social responsibility is well established in many developed countries. Founded on the notion of reciprocal benefits, this interest is emerging in developing countries in the form of schemes that build employee skills, increase employee loyalties to their companies and raise company profiles in the communities served.

12. Climate change threatens to undo past development gains and is increasing vulnerability, especially among the poor. Volunteerism's long tradition in the field of environmental activism and engagement was not addressed to any significant extent during the International Year of Volunteers, nor was it in follow-up resolutions. This report responds to the call in *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2007* for making climate change an enhanced part of the international development agenda by highlighting the role and contribution of volunteer action in this vital area. It is increasingly apparent that local volunteer engagement in such areas as climate change and desertification monitoring, biodiversity and heritage conservation, environment policy implementation and comprehensive recycling is critical to the world's sustainable future.

III. Progress in implementation

13. A paramount consideration in this overview of progress is that perceptions of volunteerism vary. The term corresponds to actions undertaken out of free choice; not motivated by financial gain; and that bring benefit to the community, the volunteer and society at large. While this report focuses predominantly on formal volunteering through intermediary organizations, much volunteerism is informal, spontaneous and outside any organizational setting and responds directly to local social and cultural contexts.

A. Recognition

14. Heightened awareness and recognition of the contribution of volunteerism to development plays an important role in ensuring a healthy volunteer environment. In this respect, International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development, 5 December, continues to play an important role by involving Governments, international and national development organizations, the private sector and volunteers themselves in joint actions that acknowledge the value of volunteerism to societies. The connection between volunteerism and the Millennium Development Goals in the Day's events has become more pronounced in recent times. Taking 2007 as an example, multi-stakeholder events in Chad and Guinea-Bissau discussed volunteer contributions to development and in Mauritius a forum on empowerment of young people through volunteerism was held. Volunteer fairs promoting diversity of volunteer opportunities to engage the wider community were organized in the Cook Islands, Croatia, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Samoa, the Sudan and Trinidad and Tobago. Round-table discussions and conferences on various aspects of volunteerism took place in Mali, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Uzbekistan, Yemen and elsewhere. The President of the Dominican Republic initiated a presidential award to volunteers working on environmentally

sustainable development. National volunteer recognition awards were also introduced in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bermuda, China, Croatia, Ireland, the United States of America, Zambia and others countries.

15. The role of the media and cultural events in recognizing the contribution of volunteers in post-conflict situations is becoming more pronounced. Government-sponsored radio broadcasts imparted information on the contribution of volunteerism to peacebuilding in Liberia and northern regions of Uganda; a volunteer-organized peace concert and fashion show in Sri Lanka received considerable radio and television coverage, as did musical gatherings highlighting volunteerism in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Haiti and a prize-giving ceremony for an essay competition on volunteerism in Timor-Leste. Performances demonstrating the power of volunteerism[f] to create an inclusive and peaceful society were broadcast by radio in the occupied Palestinian territories during Ramadan.

16. Volunteerism was recognized in other ways. Over 43 million people in 127 countries achieved a world record by volunteering to literally "stand up" against poverty as part of the United Nations Millennium Campaign in 2007. The Campaign supports and inspires people around the world to take action in support of the Millennium Development Goals. The European Parliament proposed in 2008 that 2011 be designated the European Year of Volunteering. National Volunteer Days were designated Ethiopia (17 May), the Sudan (11 June) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (24 July). A presidential decree in June 2007 established the National Committee for Volunteerism in the occupied Palestinian territories. "Volunteering makes you strong" was the title of national media campaigns recognizing volunteer contributions in Germany and Poland, and similar campaigns were run in Greece, Italy and elsewhere. Books were published, including one recognizing the contributions of the Zagreb volunteer centre in Croatia and another on patterns of volunteerism and citizen action with implications for Government policy in Mexico. A resolution adopted by the thirty-eighth World Scout Conference in 2008 called for recognizing volunteerism as a priority within the "Strategy for Scouting" and to maximize the opportunity provided by the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers.

17. Increasing attention is being paid to volunteerism in the wake of natural disasters, conflict and famine. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations Volunteers are collaborating on follow-up to volunteering aspects of the outcome of the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction through the development of sustainable volunteer structures that strengthen mechanisms for coping with and responding to disasters. In 2008, the Ministry of National Defence of Bolivia and the White Helmets Commission of Argentina agreed to undertake a joint research programme on the importance of volunteer coordination in natural disasters. The National Council of Social Welfare of Japan strengthened procedures to swiftly establish volunteer centres in areas affected by natural disasters to help ensure effective volunteer management. Following the devastating earthquake in 2005, Pakistan established a national volunteer movement to cope with future natural disasters. National action plans on disaster risk reduction and management included establishing national rosters of volunteers in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Bangladesh created a cyclone warning system that relies on volunteers to alert villages of approaching meteorological conditions. In 2006, an emergency volunteer database was launched in the Syrian Arab Republic. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Government-endorsed volunteer

campaigns have aimed at promoting a peacefully multicultural society. Since 2007, Liberia's National Youth Volunteer Service has provided opportunities for young people to volunteer for their nation's reconstruction and development.

18. National human development reports indicate how volunteerism is perceived in national development contexts. Significant increases in references in the Reports to volunteerism, begun in 2001, continue with a trend towards the enhanced substance of volunteerism's role and contribution together with linkages to the Millennium Development Goals. Since 2005, some reports have underscored volunteerism as a significant asset for social and economic development. A report on Egypt,[3] for example, states that the contributions of citizens who volunteer time to the well-being of society, both economic and social, are "enormous". Similar sentiments are expressed in reports on Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Russian Federation. Recent national human development reports also reflect a move away from depicting volunteer work as charitable action and towards highlighting its reciprocal elements from which volunteers also benefit. Examples include the reports on Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey. More broadly, the Reports are now incorporating volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations as contributors to addressing multifaceted economic and social issues, for example in Belarus, Bhutan, China, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Timor-Leste and Uruguay.

19. In the annex to resolution 56/38 the General Assembly recommended that Governments "establish the economic value of volunteering" to boost its visibility and credibility and stimulate supportive policies. An important step was taken by the United Nations Statistics Division in 2003 when it issued the *Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts*[4] calling on countries to produce regular "satellite accounts" on non-profit institutions and volunteering as part of regular national accounting. Thirty-two countries have committed to producing such accounts and 10 have done so already. Initial findings from eight reporting countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Japan, New Zealand and the United States of America) indicate that the non-profit sector, including volunteering, accounts for an average 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).[5] Because many countries lack data on volunteering to include in satellite accounts, an initiative was launched with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2007 to develop a procedure for measuring volunteer work through national labour force surveys. Initial results of these initiatives were discussed at the Global Assembly on Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering convened by the Center for Civil Society Studies of Johns Hopkins University in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division and the United Nations Volunteers. The meeting, held in Bonn in 2007, was attended by statistical officials and civil society leaders from 34 countries, in addition to officials from international development organizations and international foundations.

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[3] See United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Egypt Human Development Report 2005: Choosing Our Future: Towards a New Social Contract*.

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.XVII.9.

[5] See *Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering: Initial Findings from Implementation of the United Nations Handbook on Non-profit Institutions*, Center for Civil Society Studies, Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, 2007).

20. Recognition of the impact of volunteering on women, especially women living in poverty, has been overlooked so far in follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers, a result of the perception that volunteerism benefits others rather than having a reciprocal nature. Such women spend considerable time and effort engaged in a range of volunteer activities they find valuable for sharing information, expressing creativity, raising self-awareness and awareness of others, and gaining skills and experience that may be transferable to parenting, employment and other domains of their lives. Valuing the contribution women make through volunteerism would help guide policies designed to encourage and support volunteer action. Policies intended to incorporate a gender approach to supporting volunteerism should, however, take into account the fact that men tend to predominate in decision-making roles concerning volunteering, as in other areas of community life.

B. Facilitation

21. Facilitating volunteerism aims to ensure that the maximum number of people from the broadest range of backgrounds have access to volunteer opportunities. Policies for inclusion call for a diversity of structures, mobilization schemes and management strategies to reflect country-specific situations. In developed countries, official policy on domestic and international volunteering recognizes both the intrinsic benefits to society of citizen engagement and the services volunteers provide. In developing countries, volunteerism is deeply embedded in local traditions but rarely identified as a resource to be channelled towards development. Even where its value is recognized, resource pressures mean that public funds are rarely made available for facilitation. The situation is evolving, albeit gradually.

22. National volunteer centres and platforms can play a critical role in facilitating volunteer contributions to development. The national family welfare programme in Peru tracks volunteer activities, raises awareness of volunteerism and coordinates projects of volunteer-involving organizations. Similar platforms and programmes exist in Bangladesh, Ecuador, Singapore and elsewhere. National volunteer centres such as the Volunteer Information and Coordination Centre in Sri Lanka disseminate information on volunteer opportunities, harmonize volunteer efforts and build capacity of local volunteer-involving organizations. The Volunteer Information Resource Centre in Viet Nam aims to promote and facilitate volunteer contributions to development. National agencies such as the Department for Civic Participation in Ecuador encourage volunteerism across diverse demographics. Similar entities were launched in India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates, among other countries. In Estonia, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is implementing the country's first volunteerism development plan in collaboration with Volunteer Development Estonia. Typologies of volunteer centres vary considerably. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in Egypt is a quasi-governmental organization; the Business Advisory Council in Kazakhstan is managed by private-sector company volunteers; and national volunteer centres in Burkina Faso, Guatemala and Togo are led by multisector partnerships. Honduran Volunteers is a national partnership for development organized by the Government in collaboration with civil society and international organizations. Governments should factor the contribution of such volunteer centres into policy and ensure that they are adequately resourced.

23. Through volunteering, public sector employees better understand the needs and aspirations of the people their policies are intended to serve. Sierra Leone launched an "Attitude change campaign" encouraging public sector workers to improve the profile of volunteerism by volunteering themselves; civil servants in Thailand can take five days' leave a year to volunteer for a cause of their choice; civil servants in Hong Kong, China, volunteer in environmental and educational programmes; and in Canada there is official encouragement to volunteer for the 2010 winter Olympics. Recruitment processes for Government posts in Malawi take account of the volunteerism background of applicants, while municipalities and local Governments in Germany, Norway and other countries have initiated employee volunteer schemes.

24. Volunteerism offers the private sector an opportunity to enhance workforce morale and boost its image vis-à-vis consumers while displaying socially responsible behaviour. A European Parliament report encourages corporations to support volunteering and urges Governments to devise incentives for firms to transfer corporate skills and efficient practices to volunteer-involving organizations, given "the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion".[6] Corporate support for volunteering in developing countries is growing. The English-language newspaper *The Times of India*, with a circulation of 2.4 million readers, partnered with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and 50,000 volunteer teachers for a "Teach India" campaign aimed at increasing literacy and participation. The Government of the Philippines created the Bayanihang Bayan Volunteer Programme to promote private sector engagement in development projects. The Global Corporate Volunteer Council of the International Association for Volunteer Effort develops resources, good practices and opportunities for collaboration for practitioners of employee volunteer programmes globally. The private sector has enormous potential to mobilize volunteers in its workforce and this resource should be factored into official policy on volunteerism.

25. Professional volunteer management in developed countries extends to full-time professional managers and university degree programmes and is emerging in developing countries in the form of workshops and training programmes. The Cape Town Volunteer Centre in South Africa partnered with Voluntary Service Overseas to run a workshop on effective volunteer management. A national volunteer exchange platform, iVolunteer, launched the India Fellow Professional Programme to address a need for professional management expertise in volunteering in rural areas. The Lebanese Association for Volunteer Services offers training programmes in professional volunteer management and recruitment. Similar certificated training courses were introduced in Brazil, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Viet Nam and elsewhere.

26. Since the International Year of Volunteers, over 70 countries have adopted or introduced new laws or policies on volunteerism. National laws, ratified alongside the designation of organizations to promote and coordinate volunteering, have been passed in China, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea. Legislation defining the rights and responsibilities of volunteers features in South-Eastern Europe. The Volunteering Law of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia provides a legal

[6] European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development, Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion (2007/2149 (INI) document A6-0070/2008, 10 March 2008).

definition of volunteering and details the rights and responsibilities of volunteers, specifically addressing such issues as workplace safety and reimbursement of expenses. Laws were also adopted in Croatia, Hungary and Serbia. In Burkina Faso a law established a national volunteer corps and ensured legal protection for volunteers. Legislation was also introduced in Belgium, Bolivia and Kazakhstan and draft legislation has been proposed in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine, among others.

27. Governments should remain open to adjusting existing volunteerism legislation to changing circumstances, in consultation with NGOs. Governments should also address the serious gaps sometimes encountered between the adoption of laws and their implementation due to the absence of procedures, guidelines and institutional mechanisms, as well as to limited information dissemination.

28. International volunteering has always represented a special dimension of international solidarity, initially characterized by transfer of skills from developed to developing countries but increasingly by supporting capacity-building and involving exchanges of volunteers among developing countries themselves, as well as diaspora initiatives. The United Nations Volunteers places around 8,000 volunteers every year, of whom 77 per cent are from developing countries, in a wide range of development and peacebuilding programmes. In addition to volunteers from the United Kingdom, Voluntary Services Overseas invites skilled people from countries such as India, Kenya, the Philippines and Uganda to volunteer at home and abroad. Volunteer diaspora networks such as the one in Nigeria offer opportunities for expatriate nationals to return to their homeland as volunteers for a fixed period. Overall, volunteer-sending organizations are demonstrating a clear shift towards greater professionalism, efficiency and accountability. All countries sending and receiving volunteers should ensure that policies designed to facilitate volunteerism take into account the special characteristics of international exchanges of volunteers.

29. Research should play a vital role in policy-setting. A fourfold increase in the number of papers on volunteering between the 2000 and 2008 International Conferences of the International Society for Third-Sector Research is indicative of growing interest in the topic among academics, although the link with development is rarely explicit. Positive signs exist at country level. A civil society-led study in Cambodia concluded that programmes involving volunteers promote long-term self-sufficiency and community empowerment. Studies mapping domestic volunteerism are contributing to the development of volunteerism policies and schemes in Albania, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, India, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Senegal, Togo, the United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen and Zambia. A five-country study on civic service and volunteering in southern Africa in 2007 uncovered a substantial collection of service- and volunteering-related documentation, knowledge, and practical experience.[7] The World Bank and Innovations in Civic Participation held a mixed-stakeholder meeting in 2008 to evaluate existing research on the impact of youth volunteer programmes, assess existing evaluation methods, ascertain gaps in current research and develop a

[7] *Research Partnerships Build the Service Field in Africa: Special Issue on Civic Service in the Southern African Development Community*. A joint issue of *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher*, University of Johannesburg, and the *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, University of Zimbabwe School of Social Work, March 2007.

research agenda to address the gaps. Notwithstanding these examples, academic research in developing countries on volunteerism and its implications for policy is extremely limited. Governments should encourage academic and community research partnerships to advance knowledge of the social, cultural and economic impact of volunteering, and itself undertake or support quality studies.

C. Networking

30. Most networking continues through face-to-face meetings at which volunteers, volunteer-involving organizations, Governments and other stakeholders exchange views, discuss developments and create innovative partnerships. Increasingly, however, volunteer-related media outlets inform volunteers of opportunities and best practices and assist in networking among volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations.

31. At the twentieth World Volunteer Conference of the International Association for Volunteer Effort in Panama strategies to fight social exclusion and poverty through volunteerism were discussed. The Japan International Cooperation Agency launched a network for volunteers who had served in Romania to help them maintain contact, provide updates and offer volunteer support to Romanian citizens in Japan. A workshop on youth volunteer programme management was organized by the Philippine Association for Volunteer Effort, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Philippines National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency. The European Volunteer Centre hosted diverse conferences on volunteerism, including on volunteering as a means to integrate migrants, promoting volunteer opportunities for lifelong learning, volunteering in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and volunteering and employability. The International Forum on Development Service, hosted by the Government of Japan, considered Government's role alongside international volunteers following natural disasters. A conference on "The influence of the process of monetarization on voluntary service", organized by the European University of Volunteer Service, discussed the ramifications of the modern market economy on the supply of and demand for volunteers. A high-level Latin American intergovernmental meeting in El Salvador considered youth volunteerism for development and its implications for policy. Conferences highlighting linkages between public sector entities and volunteer-involving organizations were held in Brazil, Canada, Israel, Malaysia, the United Kingdom and the United States, among other countries.

32. The World Volunteer Web (www.worldvolunteerweb.org), managed by the United Nations Volunteers, has become a valued information resource for volunteerism, promoting awareness and encouraging active involvement. In 2006 the site received a World Bank-sponsored award from Web4Dev, a network of over 85 United Nations, private sector and non-governmental organizations, for excellence in web design and development. An increasingly dynamic website is envisaged with further interactive tools for users, dedicated language and/or regional versions, increased access to toolkits and other learning and training devices, as well as a database of volunteering opportunities.

33. Developments in communication technologies are spreading awareness about volunteerism and are catering for growing interest in short-term, flexible volunteer

assignments, especially among young people. Global social networking sites host forums for volunteers and organizations to interact. Online networking opportunities for volunteers include idealist.org, ICVolunteers and the Network for Good while examples from developing countries include the V2V online networking organization in Brazil and Haces Falta ("You are needed") in Mexico. National online volunteer databases include "Volunteer Office" in Sweden and "Volunteering" in Slovakia. Brazil's media-focused Instituto Ressoar contributes to discussions by producing popular television and radio broadcasts on volunteerism and social engagement. In the United Kingdom, MediaTrust trained 1,200 volunteers in blogging and podcasting to help them raise the profile of their organizations and communicate more effectively with other stakeholders. Mobile phones are starting to impact on volunteerism in developing countries. The Ministry of Communications and Technology in the Syrian Arab Republic partnered with mobile phone service providers and NGOs to send free text messages advertising a volunteer blood donation database. Brazil's 0800 Youth Network employs text messaging on volunteer opportunities and community services to reach young people from poor neighbourhoods. Electronic newsletters ensure rapid provision of volunteer-related information. The International Association for Volunteer Effort initiated an online youth newsletter to promote better understanding of volunteering by young people while the Worldwide Alliance for Citizen Participation online newsletter covers developments within civil society organizations around the world, including on volunteering.

34. Advances in communication technology and changing lifestyles are resulting in a growth of online volunteering. Its contribution to national development was discussed at the Third Web for Development Conference, held at United Nations Headquarters in 2006. Initially largely focused on technology and web development, online volunteering is moving into other fields such as capacity development and project and resource management. The Online Volunteering service of the United Nations Volunteers has received over 26,000 applications since 2001 and mobilized 13,000 volunteers from 182 countries. Over 60 per cent of the volunteers were women and 46 per cent were from developing countries. The United Nations Volunteers is expanding the service by implementing a multilingual site compliant with current web accessibility assessments. Many people wishing to volunteer are, however, still unaware of online volunteering opportunities while potential user organizations are unfamiliar with the technologies and procedures involved. Governments can play an important role in raising public awareness of online volunteering as a viable option for citizen engagement.

D. Promotion

35. Promotion of volunteerism continues for all population groups. Young people remain the primary target although there are indications of growth of promotional work aimed at older persons. Volunteerism as a route out of social exclusion for marginalized groups was taken up at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly in 2000.[8] Subsequently, greater attention has been given to strategies promoting inclusive volunteerism for socially marginalized groups,

[8] See resolution S-24/2.

including disabled people, people living with HIV/AIDS, ethnic minorities and the poor.

36. The United Nations *World Youth Report 2007*[9] discussed volunteerism in the context of improving youth participation and positively directing the energy, vigour and innovation of young people towards realizing development goals. The Government of Mexico established an International Volunteering for Sustainable Development pilot programme offering young people flexible, shorter-term volunteer opportunities to encourage participation in areas of particular attraction to them such as climate change, migration and human rights. A number of countries in Africa are developing or expanding national volunteer service corps. Examples in Cape Verde, the Gambia, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia offer youth opportunities to enhance their employability, helping to develop their understanding of citizenship and encouraging participation in community- and nation-building. Similarly, the Tonga National Volunteer Scheme, established under the National Youth Congress of the Ministry of Youth, equips young people with skills they can use in volunteer placements within the Government as well as with civil society and the private sector. The Youth Ambassadors for Peace volunteer programme in five countries of the Economic Community of West African States, namely Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo, aims at post-conflict consolidation of peace, national recovery and reconciliation. Burkina Faso's Youth Volunteer Programme engages young people in education, health and environmental protection activities while Ethiopia's Environmental Protection Agency includes a youth volunteer corps to combat desertification. Young volunteers at a new branch of Students Partnership Worldwide in Sierra Leone, established by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and several development agencies, help combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Countries where innovative Government-led youth volunteerism for development programmes have been launched include Brazil, Ukraine and Uruguay. While trends towards Government promotion of youth participation through volunteerism are encouraging, the potential to mobilize other population groups should not be overlooked.

37. Public and private universities promote social participation among students, as part of their studies as well as extracurricular activities. The Government of Ecuador supports the Quito Young Volunteers programme which brings together hundreds of school and university students with out-of-school youth to volunteer in development projects, and also helps integrate civic participation studies in the curricula of Quito's universities. The Talloires Network, established in 2005, is a global association of academic institutions committed to promoting the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education. The member universities in Chile, Egypt, Eritrea, Ghana, Israel, Jordan, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States are including extracurricular volunteer and service programmes for their students. Some universities, such as the Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba in Brazil, now include volunteering and service in course structures, a practice among universities in Finland and Spain for some years.

38. With ageing demographics, especially in developed countries, there is growing attention to contributions of older persons through volunteerism. The "baby boom"

[9] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.IV.1.

generation is technologically competent, well educated, and has different expectations from those of previous generations of senior volunteers, particularly with respect to flexibility and a desire to travel. Networks such as the European Isolation to Inclusion project help ensure that older people, through volunteering, remain active in their communities. The Peace Corps Senior Programme in Norway is tailored to older volunteers with managerial experience while the Japan International Cooperation Agency's Senior Volunteer Programme mobilizes volunteers with strong interests in technical cooperation activities. The Senior European Volunteer Exchange Network and the European Union's Think Future, Volunteer Together programmes demonstrate good practices in experiential exchanges of senior volunteers among European countries. Senegal has a corps of senior volunteers (Corps des Volontaires du Troisième age), an initiative of retired civil servants wishing to apply acquired skills. In 2007, the Brazilian volunteer-based community organization Older Person Pastoral worked with over 12,000 community leaders in programmes aimed at enhancing the dignity of older persons.

39. Volunteerism is increasingly seen as a means to combat exclusion. An expert working group convened in 2007 by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Volunteers dealt with volunteerism as one form of civic engagement and considered its inclusion in political and planning processes for economic and social development. The Rehabilitation Council of the Indian Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment promotes volunteerism among people with disabilities by highlighting the contribution they can make to society, while the response of the Government of the United Kingdom to the report of the independent Commission on the Future of Volunteering in 2008 included the creation of a new access to volunteering fund to offset additional costs associated with involving disabled persons. In Brazil, programmes were implemented to improve accessibility to volunteer opportunities for disabled persons, who constitute 15 per cent of the total population. Furthermore, the Government's "Zero Hunger" programme, building on deep-seated traditions of solidarity and aiming to eliminate hunger and social exclusion, prioritized social mobilization through volunteer action. In Australia, migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are encouraged to volunteer to promote understanding of their new community, practise language skills, meet new people and establish social networks. The Community Volunteers Network on HIV and Drug Prevention in Viet Nam has mobilized 9,000 volunteers, including HIV-positive people, in community networks to fight narcotic use and HIV infection. Governments need to incorporate volunteerism in policies aimed at promoting the inclusion of all people, including groups traditionally perceived as recipients of volunteerism. However, this needs to be managed sensitively to avoid compounding the hardships they face and to ensure that volunteer experiences are empowering.

40. Reporting on the significant role of volunteerism for the environment has been limited in the past. In Togo, Youth Volunteers for the Environment, coordinating with the Ministry of Health, Energy and Environment, trained women volunteers in rural communities to generate and use solar power for water purification and cooking. In the process, women gained greater control over their lives. The National Police Force of Bolivia formed the Green Brigades of young volunteers to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and to run environmental activities. The Government of Niger implemented an environment conservation scheme that decentralized responsibility to local volunteer groups and in the process built local

capacity to develop sustainable income-generating projects in areas threatened by progressive desertification. At the global level, hundreds of leading scientists volunteered to take part in the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which received the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for its contribution to enhancing knowledge in this field.

41. The International Conference on Combating Desertification held in Beijing in January 2008 concluded that local community participation in combating desertification and land degradation was crucial to successful resource management. Community initiatives are invariably volunteer-based. The joint report of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Bank and the World Resources Institute, *World Resources 2008 Roots of Resilience: Growing the Wealth of the Poor*, identifies three key volunteer roles. First, good governance must ensure local community ownership of resource management. Government-facilitated, community volunteer coastal fisheries monitoring in Fiji has led to increased yields and a revival of traditional volunteer-based social customs. This experience is being replicated in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and the Solomon Islands. Second, community capacities for ecosystem management must be unlocked. Volunteer involvement in the Integrated Water Resource Development Project of the Government of India helps ensure community understanding of the impact of their conservation efforts and contributes to greater compliance. Third, communities must be connected to adaptive networks that help them learn and link to markets. In remote northern Bangladesh, a successful local wetland livelihood restoration project is being replicated by the Government based on reports from volunteer-led community organizations.

IV. The United Nations system

42. United Nations Development Assistance Framework/country programme action plan process aims to assist Governments and United Nations country teams to achieve national development priorities, demonstrate growing awareness of volunteerism's role and contribution. Approaches to mobilizing volunteerism, especially among disadvantaged women, youth and minorities, in self-help groups to access goods and services is evident in the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks for Benin, Bhutan, Egypt, Guatemala, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Examples of specific population groups being targeted through volunteerism can be found in the establishment of youth volunteer schemes in Kyrgyzstan and Liberia and through HIV/AIDS awareness-raising, protection and treatment programmes in Benin, Guinea-Bissau, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and the United Republic of Tanzania. References to volunteerism in country programme action plans are still relatively limited and mainly concerned with cost-effective, local access provision to basic services, promoting social inclusion and local capacity-building. It is encouraging that the One United Nations pilot country plans for Albania, Mozambique, Rwanda and Viet Nam incorporate volunteerism for enhancing access to health services and combating social exclusion.

43. The experience of recognizing and promoting volunteerism among United Nations organizations remains mixed. Examples of publications highlighting the contribution of volunteerism include a book of volunteer-involving agencies concerned with heritage conservation published by UNESCO World Heritage Education and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) publication report,

The State of the World's Children 2008[10] which underscored the role of volunteers in community health programmes that meet maternal health needs and reduce child mortality rates during complex emergencies. A case of volunteer advocacy was the "Fight Hunger: Walk the World" campaign, undertaken by the World Food Programme in partnership with TNT and Unilever, that marked International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development in 2007. Involving more than 700,000 volunteers in over 100 countries, the campaign raised funds to provide meals to over 100,000 children for one school year and received a special mention in a speech by Pope Benedict XVI for contributing to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

44. Many United Nations organizations mobilize volunteers to support national projects and programmes. The UNESCO Patrimonito pilot projects raised awareness of the necessity of protecting, preserving and promoting cultural heritage sites. The UNICEF child-led environmental education initiative in Albania increased children's awareness and understanding of the impact of environmental degradation on their health and encouraged their voluntary participation in protecting and preserving the natural environment. The World Health Organization mobilized 800,000 local volunteers in Bangladesh, in conjunction with the Government, UNICEF and others, to implement a mass polio immunization campaign. Similar campaigns relying on massive volunteer participation were carried out in Nigeria against measles, in India against hepatitis B and in Somalia against polio. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East opened two legal centres in the Syrian Arab Republic staffed by volunteer lawyers to provide assistance, in particular, to female refugees.

45. The United Nations Volunteers adopted a business model in 2006 to reflect General Assembly resolution 57/106 requesting it to continue its efforts, together with other stakeholders, to raise awareness of volunteerism, increase reference and networking resources and provide technical cooperation to developing countries in the field of volunteerism. The model addresses three areas, namely advocacy for volunteerism and development globally, integrating volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing volunteers for peace and development. The United Nations Volunteers Special Voluntary Fund has been extensively applied to stimulate, facilitate and support many of the kinds of initiatives mentioned in this report.

46. The International Labour Organization is cooperating with the Johns Hopkins Centre for Civil Society Studies, in collaboration with the United Nations Volunteers, to develop a manual to guide labour force statisticians in measuring volunteer work as part of official labour force surveys throughout the world. The United Nations Development Fund for Women's gender-responsive budgeting initiative, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Volunteers, ensures that women's volunteer contributions to national development in Latin America are made visible to policymakers and other stakeholders.

[10] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.XX.7.

V. International Year of Volunteers plus 10

47. The International Year of Volunteers had a profound impact on volunteerism around the world. Marking the International Year's tenth anniversary offers considerable potential for achieving enhanced levels of awareness of and commitment to volunteerism on the part of Governments and other stakeholders. Many ideas on possible actions have emerged from extensive consultations with Governments, civil society and the United Nations system at global, regional and local levels.

48. First and foremost, there is a strong desire to see the re-establishment of multi-stakeholder International Year national committees to plan for and implement activities. Some committees from 2001 still exist including in Austria, Luxembourg and Portugal, and have helped to "institutionalize" volunteering and give it a continuous voice vis-à-vis Government. Second, in leading up to the tenth anniversary, recognition of the contribution of volunteerism to development should be incorporated into policies of Governments and the United Nations system to provide a solid basis for taking full advantage of the occasion. Third, recognition of volunteerism can be engendered in the wider population through high-profile cultural, sports and other events. In the area of sports, for example, various world championships and tournaments offer excellent opportunities to recognize the reliance on volunteers at sporting events. Fourth, significant international, regional and national media events could be promoted that link national broadcasters across the world to showcase the best of volunteering, including performances, documentaries, and interviews with celebrities and political leaders. Fifth, on International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development in 2011 all public sector and United Nations system employees could be given the opportunity to volunteer with a cause of their choice.

49. A dedicated page would be set up on the World Volunteer Web site in early 2009 to report on preparations for and events marking the tenth anniversary around the world.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

50. **The momentum created by the International Year of Volunteers continues to ensure the vibrancy of volunteerism globally with the involvement of more people, from a broader cross-section of societies. Governments, civil society, the media, academia and the private sector are all increasingly recognizing the significant contribution of volunteerism to meeting development goals, facilitating access of people to volunteer opportunities, supporting networking of volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations and promoting higher levels of volunteerism. Various factors impact on the pace and direction of volunteerism, including demographic changes, new forms of technology, increasing interest in corporate social responsibility, demands for professionalism in volunteer management and the globalization of volunteer opportunities. These need to be recognized and understood if volunteerism is to be properly incorporated into policy that nurtures the positive trends and tackles the challenges identified.**

51. In Africa, volunteerism is moving up the development agenda, although it is still held back by a narrow view limited to formal service volunteering, overlooking the rich traditions of mutual aid and self-help prevalent in the region. In many countries in transition in Eastern Europe there is growing interest in volunteerism as a route to greater citizen engagement, safeguarding recent democratic gains. Volunteerism is more clearly identified in Asia and Latin America and good progress is being made in terms of support from all sectors. Support for volunteerism in the Arab States should be strengthened if it is to take full advantage of the recent emergence of civic engagement in the region. The common United Nations system approach to programming at the country level aids consideration of volunteerism across the board. At the level of individual United Nations organizations and programmes, however, the situation is more mixed. While volunteerism underpins much of the work of the United Nations, progress in recognizing the many ways people volunteer and the factors that influence this contribution, with corresponding implications for policies and programmes, is still limited.

52. The present report points to further action that Governments and the United Nations system should take to build on successes since the International Year of Volunteers. The fact that expressions of volunteerism reflect local social, cultural and political contexts, and that there is no blueprint for action, should be stressed. The availability of volunteer infrastructure continues to be a crucial element for ensuring the fullest participation in volunteerism for development. This report cites examples of policy, legislation, volunteer schemes, volunteer centres and other types of infrastructure that can help raise interest, recruit, retain and reward people who wish to volunteer. The need to ensure an inclusive approach to developing infrastructure is essential.

53. Direct-contact volunteering continues to be the predominant expression of volunteerism, but the expansion of other forms of volunteering that involve engagement from a distance, such as online volunteering, should be factored into policy on volunteerism. In addition to opening up options to participate for population groups unable to volunteer "on site", they are also attractive to young people who tend to be familiar with new communications technologies and seek less formal ways to volunteer.

54. Governments should recognize the expanding involvement of the private sector in support of volunteerism and encourage companies to establish and expand employee volunteer schemes by providing incentives and other benefits as appropriate, in consultation with organizations that involve volunteers.

55. The report has highlighted the emergence of greater professionalism in the management of formal volunteer programmes in developing countries in recent years. Governments should support efforts to establish accredited professional volunteer management courses, drawing on existing experiences elsewhere but adapted to local circumstances.

56. A favourable legislative framework helps ensure that volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations feel secure in their volunteer experiences. However, care is needed not to over-regulate volunteerism. Governments should consider the adequacy of the legal environment whenever support to volunteerism is discussed, and address the serious gap between passing laws and implementing them.

57. **The formulation of sound policies and programmes that consider the contributions of volunteerism in addressing development goals should be based on sound knowledge of the characteristics of volunteerism in the local context. Efforts should be made to mobilize and support the research community to carry out more studies on the subject, in partnership with civil society.**

58. **Statutory and other meetings of the United Nations system dealing with inclusion should be encouraged to incorporate volunteerism as one path out of exclusion for marginalized and vulnerable people. It is proposed, in particular, that the Commission for Social Development be invited to consider volunteerism for development in the context of its priority theme of social integration at its forty-seventh and forty-eighth sessions in 2009 and 2010, respectively.**

59. **Youth remains a key focus of many Government-supported volunteer initiatives and should continue to be a key area of attention. However, Governments should not lose sight of the potential and need for other segments of the population, particularly older people, to engage in volunteerism, given their potential to contribute lifetime experiences and skills and also to reduce their marginalization.**

60. **Environmental considerations have received little attention to date in intergovernmental discussions on volunteerism. With current global awareness of how environmental issues impinge on all aspects of development, greater efforts are needed to ensure that climate change and the environment feature on the volunteerism agenda of Governments and the United Nations.**

61. **Greater effort is needed to raise awareness of the ways people volunteer to support the work of United Nations organizations and programmes and to draw conclusions for policy and programme development. Discussions on the topic should be encouraged in statutory and other meetings. To assist in this, events to highlight "Volunteerism for development and the work of the United Nations system" could be organized during 2010 and include the broadest possible participation of United Nations organizations and programmes. A comprehensive report would be produced and widely disseminated.**

62. **Marking the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers would inject new vitality and resources into ongoing efforts to support volunteerism and its contribution to meeting development challenges. Governments and other stakeholders should be encouraged to develop plans at country, regional and global levels to maximize the benefits from the occasion. The United Nations Volunteers, as focal point in the United Nations system for follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers, will actively support dissemination of information on actions around the event and assist in their implementation, within the framework of its existing mandate and resources.**

63. **The two plenary meetings convened by the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development, 5 December 2001, with a special event to mark the closing of the International Year, was highly effective in heightening public awareness and support for volunteerism at the global level. It is suggested that similar arrangements be made to mark the close of the tenth anniversary of the International Year on or around 5 December 2011. It is suggested, furthermore,**

that informal, interactive round-table discussions on the role and contribution of volunteerism to development be held prior to the plenary meetings, with the participation of Member States, observers, organizations of the United Nations system and NGOs.